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TAGA SPORTS

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2018

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WEIGHTLIFTING 101 ▪ BROTHERS IN ARMS ▪ Q&A: KEITH LONGUSKI
EDAMAME CHAWAN-MUSHI ▪ A BIKE ON WATER, BUT NOT REALLY
RUNNING WITH GECKOS ▪ 6 FOOLPROOF NUTRITION TIPS
BUILDING CHARACTER THROUGH KENDO

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Learn something new...

...IN THE KITCHEN

Mami Ikeda goes for the culinary jugular here, showing us how to make her version of that comfort food called *chawan-mushi*. As this is comfort food for the typical Japanese mom, there is probably a version out there that is not as finicky or sensitive to prepare but Mami's version brings it a notch higher up the culinary ladder, a higher-end *chawan-mushi* that will be a challenge for people who cook like they expect a miracle each time they venture into the kitchen (like me!). ***See story on Page 4***

...IN THE GYM

Dre Delos Santos outlines six nutrition tips that go against common knowledge—and he starts us off with an admonition not to fear salt. Wait, what? I was told to fear salt. But, contrary to what he says is common misconceptions, Dre says that salt is, in fact, a major contributor for optimal health and performance. Of course, that doesn't mean I will be scooping salt into my muesli but it's a relief to know it is no villain to my health. ***See story on Page 8***

...ON THE PATHWAY

Our Q&A this edition feature Keith Longuski, a physician assistant at the Commonwealth Health Center but more known as a fixture on the Beach Road pathway—the shirtless runner who appears immune to the relentless rays of the sun.

...IN SOCCER

In the movie *Field of Dreams*, a disembodied voice cajoles the character of Kevin Costner (Rey) to build a baseball diamond on his land, with the promise that, "If you build it, he will come." Despite the movie's surreal premise, Rey did build one and the film's rousing crescendo echoes the hopes and dreams of everyone involved in the construction of the NMI Soccer Training Center—not only of building a soccer pitch that will be a fitting stage for future soccer stars of the CNMI but also creating a facility that will boost the CNMI's sports tourism campaign.

WANT TO GET SOMETHING OFF YOUR CHEST?

You have a beef with something? Want to get it off your chest? For questions, criticisms, letters, and suggestions, email them to editor@saipantribune.com.

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Managing Editor

ROSELYN MONROYO

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association president Jerry Tan, left, joins the CNMI Women's U19 National Team's celebration after presenting the squad with the Marianas Cup trophy for defeating the Guam team, 3-2, in last Oct. 7.

COVER ART

The CNMI's Krizel Tuazon, right, and Guam's Samantha Fegurgur battle for the ball during the first half of their game in the 2018 Marianas Cup at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Oct. 7.

Photography by
JILL ESPIRITU/GUAM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2018

scoreboard

22 Weightlifting 101.
ROSELYN MONROYO

19 Building character through kendo.
KIMBERLY BAUTISTA

FOOD & HEALTH

4 Edamame Chawan-Mushi.
MAMI IKEDA

YOUR HEALTH

8 Six nutrition tips that will change your life.
DRE DELOS SANTOS

FEATURES

12 Q&A: Keith Longuski.
MARK RABAGO

16 Building a world-class soccer team one pitch at a time.
ROSELYN MONROYO

18 History at the Marianas Cup.
ROSELYN MONROYO

20 A bike on water, but not really.
ERWIN ENCINARES

HOLDING COURT

24 Running with Geckos.
JON PEREZ

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

26 Brothers in arms.
MARK RABAGO

writer'sbloc

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA
Kimberly Bautista is the youngest and the newest addition to the pack of TAGA *Sports* reporters. Kimberly currently covers all crime-related beats for the *Saipan Tribune*. She is not a sports enthusiast but she does get enthusiastic when watching tall men (like Lebron James) play.

DRE DELOS SANTOS
Dre Delos Santos, a Mount Carmel School alumnus, earned his bachelor's degree in Kinesiology at the University of Hawaii and now runs his own fitness business as a certified strength coach in Honolulu.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Erwin is a reporter for *Saipan Tribune*. He loves fries, but nuggets also have a special place in his heart. He often spaces out as he debates within himself which fast food staple reigns supreme. So far, the nuggets have it.

MAMI IKEDA
Mami Ikeda considers herself a daughter of the Koto Restaurant that was ran by her late parents in Susupe back in the late '70s to early '80s. A member of disaster relief team C.O.R.E. and the Commonwealth Racing Federation, and an advocate for the Commonwealth Cancer Association, Mami loves being a crazy cat mom and herb gardening. To reach her, email mami96950@gmail.com.

ROSELYN MONROYO
Roselyn started covering CNMI football since she came to Saipan in 2005 and is proud to see the players who were just running around in makeshift pitches at the American Memorial Park and various schools blossom to become members of the Commonwealth national teams that played in the 2018 Marianas Cup.

JON PEREZ
When he first arrived on Saipan more than 10 years ago, some people thought that he came from Guam due to his last name, while others won't believe that he's Filipino.

MARK RABAGO
When he was still a little boy, Mark Rabago wanted to be a soldier. He became an officer in high school ROTC. In college, he quit the University of the Philippines' Vanguard (the college's ROTC program) because it would conflict with his time in the basketball court.

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Edamame Chawan-Mushi

MAMIIKEDA
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Chawan-mushi is one of the most popular comfort food (or should I say a soul food) in home cooking. It's nutritious, fluffy, like a savory *leche* flan. The authentic version is a simple *dashi* and egg mix with chicken or shrimp, slices of shiitake, a slice of *kamaboko*, maybe a slice of bamboo shoot, and a steamed *ginko* nut, dressed with aromatic trefoil, but Japanese moms put anything their family likes, or just about anything that are left in the fridge. And here's one from me *aka* soy-fanatic, non-oil but creamy *chawan-mushi*!

Ingredients (1 serving)

- 50 ml soymilk
- 1 egg (medium size)
- 25ml hot water
- 1 tsp hondashi
- ½ tsp mirin
- ¼ tsp soy sauce
- A pinch of salt
- A handful frozen edamame
- 5-7 small cubes tofu
- 1 dried shiitake mushroom

Dashi Glaze:

- Edamame and shiitake slices
- 50ml water
- ½ tsp hondashi
- Mirin
- Salt
- 1/3 tsp corn starch

WHERE TO GET

- **Kirkland Plain Soy Milk:** Joeten Superstore (cheapest) and most Chinese stores have it now.
- **Hondashi (Shimaya Katsuo Dashi), Kikkoman Aji-Mirin:** Joeten
- **Green Hat Organic Frozen Edamame, Dried Shiitake Mushrooms, Morinaga Silken Tofu:** Most of the Chinese stores have these for less than $2 a package.

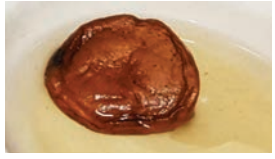
PREPPING:

1

Microwave/defrost frozen edamame.

Cut tofu into little cubes (like the one in miso soup), and slice shiitake into strips.

Place the dried shiitake mushroom in hot water at least 30 minutes before you start cooking. Shiitake is ready when it's plump enough to cut into slices. Don't throw away the water! We're going to use this solution with umami from the shiitake in our egg mixture.



Make the egg mix: Mix hondashi, mirin, salt, soy sauce and umami solution from dried shiitake.

2

When stirring the egg, try not to make too much bubbles. Our goal is a smooth, pudding-like result.

Pour seasoned soymilk into egg. Stir slowly until the two solutions blend into one. Run the egg mix through a strainer; this makes a lot of difference in the result! »

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Make an edamame puree: Set aside some for topping, and place the rest of the edamame and a tablespoon of egg mix into a blender or food processor. If your blender isn't doing a good job (like what happened when I used a Nutribullet...), then press it through strainer with a spatula (I used the one that comes with rice cooker). It will be tastier if there are bits and unmashed pieces.

Blend the edamame puree into the egg mix. Stir slowly.

Place cubed tofu and slices of shiitake mushroom at the bottom of a ceramic bowl (set aside some shiitake slices for topping!). Slowly pour the edamame egg mix into the bowl.

Lightly cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Place in a steamer and steam at low heat for 10-15 minutes. Then turn steamer off and rest for 5 minutes.

If using a microwave: Since the cooking time varies depending on your microwave, cook in low heat first for 2 minutes, check the content, then cook for another minute and check again. When the surface is smooth like pudding, it's done. **WARNING: Do not steam or microwave in high heat, do not bring the mixture to a boil. It's going to ruin the result!**

Make the dashi glaze: Place the edamame and shiitake slices you set aside for topping in a microwavable bowl. Put all ingredients (hondashi, mirin, salt, cornstarch, and water) into the bowl and mix well. Lightly cover the bowl with plastic wrap and heat in a microwave for 30 seconds. Take the bowl out from the microwave, stir well. **NOTE: you can do this on a stovetop in a sauce pan: low heat until cornstarch mixture becomes transparent.**

Pour the glaze onto the steamed *chawan-mushi* and dig in!

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

2018 SPORTS CALENDAR

OCTOBER

Micronesian Cup: Paddlers from Palau, Guam, and host CNMI compete in the sprints and long distance canoe races.

Friends of the Joeten-Kiyu Library Golf Tournament: The annual competition aims to raise funds for the library and its programs.

PSS Girls Middle School Basketball Tournament: Four public middle schools on Saipan vie for the girls division championships

Ironman Saipan: The second edition of Marianas Visitors Authority's signature event will allow on and off-island triahletes to enjoy Saipan's lagoon, scenic Beach Road, and the historic Marpi.

NOVEMBER

TanHoldings Tennis Classic: The annual tournament marks its 10th year and will feature Saipan and Guam players.

Turkey Trot Run: The traditional race up to Mt. Tapochao begins at Lower Base with hundreds of runners joining the early morning event.

DECEMBER

Hell of the Marianas: The century cycle race brings together on and off-island bikers as they navigate through the up and down course and enjoy Saipan's scenic views.

Christmas Island Relay: Northern Marianas Athletics' last offering for the season will have runners racing from PIC Saipan in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi.

NMIFA Fall FA Challenge Cup: Northern Mariana Islands Football Association will cap the season with a tournament for the top teams in the boys U15 and U18 divisions.

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SIX foolproof NUTRITION TIPS that will surely CHANGE your life

DREDELOS SANTOS
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Nutrition is absurdly simple. Hard, but simple.

By and large, though, we expend our time and resources looking at the wrong things—and the choices we ultimately make come down to which promises the fastest results.

Regrettably, there are no tricks or a "superfood" protocol that can shed body fat and get you from point A to point B lightning fast. But there are some gold nuggets I'd like to share with you that can have a tremendous effect in terms of your health and body composition.

1 Don't fear salt

We've been indoctrinated into this mindset where salt is to be avoided at all cost. Despite the widespread belief salt is bad for you, I'm here to tell you it is in fact a major contributor for optimal health and performance. I say this with a complete understanding it will likely take a couple more years before we erode the vilification of salt.

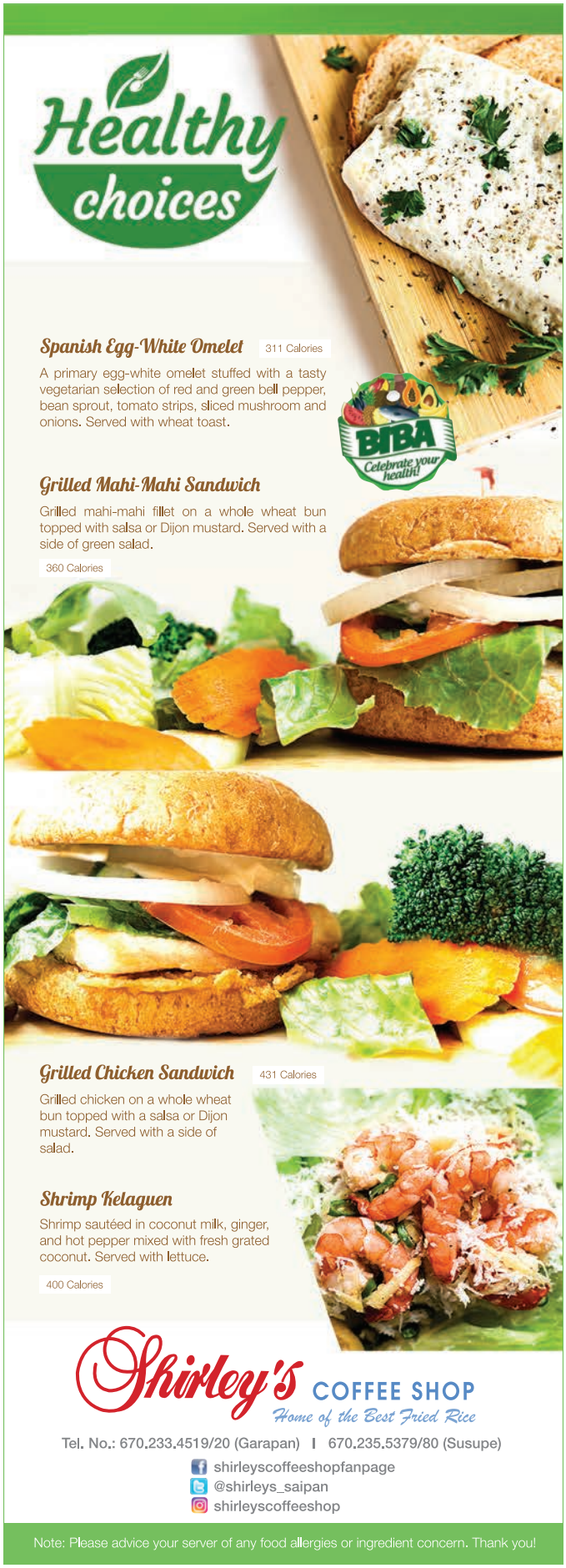
It's an essential mineral. It aids in digestion and regulates your metabolism, increases blood flow and circulation, which then helps deliver nutrients to the body, and helps remove waste.

Conversely, salt restriction can have an adverse effect on your health. You'll start to run into problems such as low blood volume, electrolyte imbalance, chronic fatigue, and headaches. These symptoms become more pronounced if you exercise regularly.

Likewise, when you cut out salt from your diet, your body compensates—it pulls minerals from your bones. In turn, you start to run on fumes, which then elevates your heart rate and blood pressure. So, if you think about it the very thing you've been told to restrict is actually causing the problem.

2 Consider taking a vitamin D supplement

It's been well documented low levels of vitamin D poses a real risk to your health. Granted, it may not be the only micronutrient we want to pay attention »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to, but it is a major player. It largely affects your mood, energy, and sleep, and can negatively impact your cognitive function and brain health. It's also worth mentioning that it plays a significant role in your immune system, and is strongly associated with your body's sensitivity to insulin.

In other words, if you're low in vitamin D chances are carbohydrates aren't your friend.

Sadly, more than 40 percent of American adults are considered deficient. In addition to sunlight, fatty fish such as tuna and salmon, whole eggs, and dairy are among the best sources.

For adults, a safe range to supplement is 2,000-4,000IU daily.

3 Everybody should be taking a magnesium supplement

Once you have the point above in check, it's important to outline the inclusion of another micronutrient, magnesium. Sufficient levels of magnesium is required because they aid in the absorption and metabolism of vitamin D.

Recent research suggests that vitamin D alone could possibly be dangerous. Too much leads to a surplus of calcium in the blood, which can cause calcification of the arteries.

Without magnesium taking vitamin D alone is rendered useless. What's more, low magnesium has been shown to increase blood pressure, and has a negative effect on carbohydrate metabolism. There is also an increased risk of bone fractures, which could also be attributed to low vitamin D.

For males, shoot for 400-450 mg. For females, 300-350 mg. If you choose to go the au naturel route, nuts and leafy vegetables are among the best food sources of magnesium.

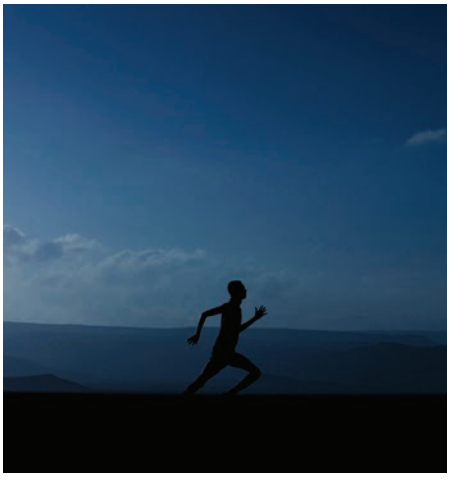
4 A brief period of eye-bulging discomfort is what you might need

Restrictive methods are completely unwarranted because at the end of the day if you can't adhere to a plan long-term, then you're bound to crash at some point. Meanwhile, there are certain individuals who need a degree of restraint in order to get the ball rolling.

I'm all for kicking your feet up and enjoying a savory meal, but for the sake of your progress, a brief period of eye-bulging discomfort is what you might need.

Generally, those who are sedentary and have baggage need to consider eliminating, or at the very least, meticulously controlling their guilty pleasures. Perhaps I'm being a bit harsh, but I'll tell you what, it's certainly the best approach to reduce your body fat and unsightly gut.

This strategy may not be sustainable, but for 30-60 days you'd be surprised how far better off you'll be when you put aside things that are counterproductive. Effectively, you'll improve your health markers which positively impacts body composition. It's not punishment. It's a rite of passage.



5 Pay close attention to your gut

For some odd reason, people perceive gas and bloating as healthy. This is especially true for those who habitually go on detoxes. Frankly, I find it mildly entertaining.

I hate to break it to you, but the only reason a detox might work well in the beginning is because you've eliminated the crap you normally consume.

Gas and bloating are not, by any stretch of the imagination, healthy. And, if you're going straight to the toilet that should already give you an indication that it is anything but. Moreover, continuing to consume foods or stay on a diet that causes gut distress wreaks havoc on your health and performance—and it makes fat loss extremely difficult.

6 Hydrate first thing in the morning

This is one of those "Thank you, Captain Obvious" moments.

And it's certainly a drum I keep beating, for good reason. The vast majority are chronically dehydrated. Many disregard and fail to understand the importance of adequate hydration.

Instead of drinking a glass of cold water first thing in the morning, you're reaching for a cup of coffee. I'm no purists, but the most important things we should give our attention to are often the simplest. Along with sleep, drinking enough water is *the easiest thing you can do to move forward.* TS

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DRIVE SOBER OR GET PULLED OVER

Keith Longuski

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Keith Longuski first came into local consciousness in December 2013 when he helped save two men from drowning in the waters off Laulau Beach.

Fast-forward to 2018 and the Commonwealth Health Center physician assistant is a mythical figure of sorts in the island's running scene, winning local races left and right.

The 34-year-old native of Ubly, Michigan started running seriously completely by accident in his junior year in high school. "I was playing football, but didn't really grow much. I ran a 5K road race and ran 17s in my first race at that distance after my sophomore year of track. The football coach said you should probably do that instead," he told TAGA *Sports*.

That initial dalliance with track led to Longuski competing in the NAIA division in college for Park University.

Since arriving on Saipan in October 2013, he has won a grand total of three Turkey Trot races and a few 10K and 5K competitions. He has also been invited to some triathlon relays as well.

When asked if will ever say goodbye to the runner's paradise that is Saipan, Longuski answer is short and simple: "Next Neveruary!"

Distressed fishermen and swimmers rejoice.

How do you motivate yourself?
Running is the most efficient use of my time to stay in shape. It is the best bang for the buck for me. Living on Saipan, it is easy to stay motivated. The weather is amazing, along with the scenery. I don't miss snow at all.

Where are your favorite running spots on island?
Beach Road, hands down. We are so lucky to have the pathway rehabilitated after Soudelor. Marpi trails are also a hidden gem. Peace Park wins for best new spot.

How often do you run in a week and for how long?
I try for at least four days per week if I can. About 4-5 miles is a reasonable goal. Not that much.

Do you prefer running in the morning or evening? Why?
Morning is usually a better time. You wake up fresh and can start the day feeling accomplished. In the evening it can be easy to get distracted or fatigued as the day wears on. It is a treat to watch the sun set, though, while finishing a run.

Do you eat before running or after?
I usually eat after, especially in the morning.

What's your pre-run meal/snack? What's your post-run meal/snack?
I'm fortunate that I am not affected by eating certain things at certain times. I just run. I just eat whatever when I'm hungry. No specific regimen.

How long is a short run for you? How long is a long run?
Now, 15 minutes, 6-7 miles. Back in the day, 4 miles and 18 miles (Every Sunday).

How do you keep yourself hydrated during a run?
I just drink prior to running and keep a bottle for after. I wouldn't think of drinking unless I run more than 10 or 12 miles.

Do you stretch before and after a run? Why?
No stretching prior. Just a slower warm up. As we age, stretching becomes more important for injury prevention after a run.

What are your preferred running shoes and apparel for running?
I've been running in Nike Pegasus since 2002. Just classic running shorts work fine for me. Saipan is a bit warm for a shirt.

Do you run with any gadgets? What are they and why?
No gadgets. It wasn't allowed when I ran in college. Just a watch.

Running alone or with a running mate?
Running alone is nice to relieve stress and anxiety about life. It is also a good time to arrange your errands and whatnot. Running with someone is always a fulfilling experience, though. It is usually great conversation while you both accomplish something.

Keith Longuski has become a fixture of the Beach Road pathway.

JON PEREZ

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Due to recent outbreaks of MUMPS in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), MEASLES in the Philippines, and even POLIO in Papua New Guinea (PNG), we are encouraging all parents to get their children up to date with all age appropriate immunizations. The fact that POLIO, a terrible disease that can leave children crippled or even result in death, is present in the pacific islands should be a concern for us all. Polio can easily be prevented with the polio (e-IPV) vaccine but many children do not have access to life saving vaccines. Children do not need to suffer needlessly when we can prevent so many of these terrible and deadly diseases.

All adults born after 1956 and travelling to places where measles and mumps are present should get vaccinated with the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine at least 28 days before departure or as soon as possible. The MMR vaccine protects us from measles, mumps, and rubella and it can be administered at all Public Health Immunization clinics Monday to Friday from 7:30am to 4:30pm. Please call 670 236 8745 for more information.

Please note that people cannot get vaccinated today and be protected tomorrow. It does not work that way. Vaccines need time to build anti-bodies in our system in order to fight and kill diseases so please do not wait for the last minute to get vaccinated.

Contact the Immunization Program at the Division of Public Health:

Saipan: 236-8745 | Tinian: 433-9233 | Rota: 532-9457

Other Nos.: 236-8708/8780/8784

CDC
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

What is preventive care?

- Preventive care includes health services like screening exams, check-ups, and patient counseling
- Getting preventive care helps to lower your chances of getting very sick or developing infections
- Getting preventive care finds illness at an early stage when treatment is likely to work best.

Examples of preventive care services include:

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STD SCREENINGS
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INTERVENTION
Quit smoking, lose weight, eat healthy, identify depression, reduce alcohol use, avoid sexually transmitted disease

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For Healthy Pregnancies

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Getting recommended preventive services and making healthy lifestyle choices are key steps to good health and well-being.

For more information call: **Family Care Clinic:** 236-8309 **Children's Clinic:** 236-8374
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Building a world-class soccer team one pitch at a time

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

"Surreal" is how former CNMI National Women's Team member Patricia Coleman described the feeling when she witnessed the inauguration of the NMI Soccer Training Center in July this year.

Having played in makeshift pitches with razor-sharp and sometimes tall grasses and covered in dust or mud, depending on the weather, one would understand where Coleman's sentiments come from.

With the soccer training center—which is fast acquiring for itself the shortened moniker NMISTC—the Commonwealth can now brag about having a facility that is up to par with other countries whose football programs started ahead of the islands.

The facility has a main artificial turf, second pitch/futsal, bleacher, offices, parking lots, and other world-class amenities.

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association executive director Ruselle Zapanta, who coordinated the construction of the Koblerville facility, said the main pitch is comparably similar to the ones found in nations that are members of the Asian Football Confederation.

"The main pitch is 105-meters-by-68-meters in length and width. We decided on a turf with 55-millimeter thread and infill materials consisting of cooler-type EPDM rubber, light green in color, over a layer of silica sand. The standard-sized pitch will host major leagues and tournaments, along with our national team practices," Zapanta said. For the non-initiated, an »

Patricia Coleman, left, a former CNMI National Women's Team member and an official in the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association Women's Committee, celebrates with her daughter, Guine, who was part of the CNMI Women's U19 National Team that defeated Guam, 3-2, in the 2018 Marianas Cup last Oct. 7.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

History at the Marianas Cup

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

History was made at the NMI Soccer Training Center when the CNMI Women's U19 National Team defeated Guam, 3-2, in the 2018 Marianas Cup last Oct. 7.

It was the first victory of the Commonwealth's female players against Guam in any tournament and it was made more special by the fact that it happened in front of the home crowd.

Players who suited up for the winning CNMI crew were in the U6 or U8 age group when the first Marianas Cup was held here in 2007, according to Patricia Coleman, an official in the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association Women's Committee. She played for the first team that saw action in the Marianas Cup, while her daughter, Guine, was part of the squad that beat Guam this year.

"Playing in the first Marianas Cup: epic. Being on the first women's national team that tied Guam: unforgettable. Watching your daughter score in the CNMI women's national team's first win (3-2) against Guam: best soccer memory ever," Coleman said.

"Our NMI teams have progressed technically and tactically. We used to spend 90 percent of Marianas Cup matches defending against Guam. Now, we are more comfortable holding the ball and attacking. We still need to continue to work hard to elevate our level of play domestically and internationally. We need parents, teachers, and the entire community to encourage females to join our sport," she added.

Coach Luem Khen Koo said the historic win was well-deserved as NMIFA, coaches, officials, and players labored through seven long years to build teams that can keep up, if not win, against high-level squads from other countries.

As for the CNMI Men's U17 National Team, it scared the favored Guam after nearly getting the win in a pretty even match and the close loss would only toughen up the Teen Ayuyus for future battles.

"It was a very good match for both teams so I talked with Guam coaches to have more games between Guam and CNMI in different age groups. We can further improve and spread the game together in our region," NMIFA technical director Michiteru Mita said.

EPDM is a durable synthetic rubber.

On the main pitch are two covered team shelter/portable dugouts. The shelter for players and officials will give them a convenient area to rest or huddle—no more sitting on the grass or at the wooden bench under the searing heat of the sun or using an umbrella when it's raining.

Goals of different sizes are used for different age groups and the main pitch, along with the secondary one, have 20-foot safety nets/back stops to assist and retain the balls in the field and minimize incidents of people outside the pitches getting hit by flying balls.

The secondary pitch can be used for regular football games, futsal, and training sessions, particularly for younger players.

"The mini pitch is a non-infill type turf at 25-millimeter in length for the thread. You will not find sand or rubber in between but… a denser turf for stability. Underneath the turf we have installed shock pads, which provide additional safety capabilities, being soft and cushiony. Although it is primarily for the kids' use, the pitch may be used by the general public," Zapanta said.

"The white primary lines measure a 60-meter-by-40-meter pitch for small-sided games. The mini pitch holds two futsal courts, which are laid out with yellow lines, one on each half of the mini pitch," he added.

Spectators get parking lots and bleachers.

"The lower parking lot provides ample parking for big events—155 slots are available on the paved portion. There are also 20-plus parking slots on the upper portion, together with the [disability parking] spaces. The rooftop has bleachers, which can hold up to 529 people," Zapanta said.

The facility can host nighttime games and other events.

"The NMISTC has invested in LED lighting system, which has wireless capabilities and features. There are four light poles, which house 17 light fixtures. Each fixture is capable of using 750 watts of power at its max and we have the ability to adjust the [light] strength from 1 to 100 percent, which allows us to save money and be more efficient," he explained. "A permanent sound system is in the works."

NMIFA's office is located inside the facility and features a conference/meeting room. There is also a room for equipment storage, along with laundry rooms and restrooms.

Chris Concepcion, managing director of the Marianas Visitors Authority, which was among the government agencies that assisted NMIFA and the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs in the construction of the NMISTC, said the facility is a big boost to MVA's sports tourism campaign. Since the opening of the facility, MVA has included the NMISTC in its promotion, aiming to attract teams and players to hold games or training sessions in the Commonwealth.

feature

BUILDING CHARACTER THROUGH KENDO

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Although the ancient Japanese form of wooden sword fighting may seem brutal to those who do not practice it, kendo is actually a unique and honorable way to shape an individual's character.

Kendo ("ken" meaning sword and "do" meaning pathway), which was established in the 17th century, is reminiscent of the form of sword fighting that samurais used in combat in the 12th century. When guns were developed in the 1500s, sword fighting in combat became irrelevant but the art of the sword fighting and the spirit of the samurai lived on through kendo.

According to local kendo instructor Masanori Takahashi, kendo may technically be a form of traditional Japanese fighting, but it is deeper than that; it teaches respect, which is valuable in the Japanese culture and an extremely vital trait in a samurai.

The objective when practicing kendo is to learn the samurai spirit for forming a person's character.

"This is traditional Japanese culture…but most importantly, kendo is spiritual…it also teaches respect for teachers, for friends, and everybody. …Kendo represents the samurai spirit," he said.

"Kendo is part of Japanese culture but we want to tell the world that it is not only for the Japanese, this is not only training. We want to teach spiritual[ity] not just in this place, but even at home…that we have to respect our family, our friends…," he added.

One of Takahashi's long-time students, 13-year-old David Tsukagoshi, said that kendo has taught him the importance of fun, proper fighting techniques, and respect for those around you.

"I started when I was 5. It looked so interesting so I got into it and, as I grew up doing this, I started to notice that even though I would get hurt, it doesn't matter. All that matters is that you have fun," he said.

Takahashi said that he has been practicing kendo since he was 6 years old until he got to high school. He took up the art again in 2010 after learning that kendo master and Himawari store owner Itsuro Hosoda had decided to bring the art to Saipan. Hosoda voluntarily teaches the ancient art as a means to give back to the community and honor the art and what it has done in his life.

Takahashi now teaches two kendo classes a week at the kendo dojo located on the second floor of the Himawari building in Garapan. The class is currently attended by a total of 30 individuals as young as 6 years old. The students are given the opportunity to participate in kendo tournaments in Nippon Budokan, Tokyo, every year.

The rules of kendo are simple. An individual must strike his/her opponent on either the face, the chest, the arm, or the throat using a bamboo sword called a shinai. Each match lasts five minutes and the first to score three points in five minutes wins the match.

Kendo competitors are provided with protective gear that consists of a face mask with a throat protector (men), arm guards (kote), waist protector (tare), and a chest protector (do).

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A bike on water,

The difficulty level of riding a bike significantly diminishes after quite some time of practice. For others, taking it easy with training wheels might make you the laughingstock of the town, at least when you are 15 years old and still riding with training wheels. At 22, I was riding a bike on the streets, no brakes, and skillfully buzzing through traffic during rush hour. I can confidently say I have good balance on a bike. Here on Saipan three years later, I tried something new: riding a bike on water, but not really.

The jetovator is a water sports accessory that is easily tethered to a jetski's motor. The device lets the rider achieve heights of over 30 feet through water pressure alone—if you are skilled enough, that is.

It actually resembles the usual anatomical positions one must maintain to keep one's balance on a bike—two hands forward to steer, two feet for the pedals, one's head facing forward—but all with a catch: you go up instead of forward. I got rid of the training wheels for my bike, but with the jetovator, I wish I had something similar to help me with the controls.

As much fun as it seems, the jetovator is just as difficult to perfectly maneuver. It's good for the thrill-seeker who gets off at anything that takes a good sense of balance and is also physically fit. While there are other water sports to explore on Saipan, the jetovator takes the cake for the most exciting and newest way to enjoy the ocean.

A little past the reefs behind the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan in Garapan, in the open ocean, is where Chris Lely of the Let's Go Marine Sports brought my friends and I to experience the jetovator.

With us were four staff from Let's Go Marine. One manned the boat to takes us out into the open ocean while two jetskis were used for the three instructors, including Lely. It was a gloomy day, and while the weather usually dictates whether the jetovator is safe to use, it really did not bother me once I saw Lely skillfully doing stunts on it, including a nose dive, some flips, and some really sharp turns. It was easy, I thought.

Lely, who has been hands-on with the jetovator since Let's Go Marine started offering it to tourists last year, made an inspiring speech about how to maintain control and how to avoid injury. Apparently, as tempting as it can be, Lely advises against jumping off the jetovator since, despite its look, it is really heavy.

Lely noted that once the signal to stand up is made, the rider must stand up, because the signal indicates the jetski's input of water pressure, or the jetovator's source of upwards propulsion. The rider should shift his weigh forward in order to counter the propulsion from the jetovator, which pushes your body back as it rises. Lely also recommends steering the jetovator using the body instead of the two independent levers that control the direction of water flow from the jetski.

For those iffy about learning how to ride the jetovator, Let's Go Marine offers riding-in-tandem, where you get to ride a two-seat jetovator with a skilled driver who knows how to get the machine to hover. For my escapade, the plan was to do some hovering over the water before making a beeline to-

ward the boat. I agreed to it but the jetovator had plans of its own.

The cold water with the chopping waves made it hard to jump onto the jetovator at first. The first to go on the jetovator was yours truly. Persuasive friends, accompanied by an easily-goaded soul such as mine, agreed to take the first ride of the trip.

The jetovator in the water is the only resemblance of a bike for the whole activity. Cold from the weather or from being the first to try what was so new to me didn't matter when the signal to stand was made. Alas, as expected, I barely made it out of the water without doing a poor attempt at a backflip.

Several attempts and several backflips later, I finally got out of the water and managed to hover—a pitiful 3 feet off the water got my heart pumping in different beats as I maintained the awkward half-squat for about 15 seconds before I got a mouthful of ocean water.

I was doing reasonably well before I lost control when I leaned too far forward. The jetovator was about to make a nosedive into the water, but I attempted to regain control by shifting my weight to the back. I overcompensated, and was, once again, back in the water.

By the time I finally got the first step out of the way, there was another hurdle to my jetovator mastery conquest: the steering. After several attempts to successfully control the takeoff from the water, I had to make my way toward the boat.

I attempted to do a 180-degree turn towards the boat since I was facing the other way, but I nearly lost my balance as I pulled on the right lever to face the boat. Apparently, I had to lean forward slightly to manipulate the water pressure to propel me forward and merely lean right until I made a complete 180, and do the same toward the boat.

As I was I about to execute my strategy, I was faced with the final hurdle: leg fatigue.

My awkward half-squat stance did prove effective, but it was not efficient. I was tensing my quads too much. My attempt at turning toward the boat to complete my experience with the jetovator proved to be futile as my legs started to give out.

I was too tired to continue. I was able to maintain at least 4 feet of air above the water, however the steering was really troubling.

Saddened by defeat, I swam towards one of two jetskis and made my way toward the boat where my friends seemed impressed by my performance. Glancing at my watch, I realized it took me over 30 minutes just to master hovering on the jetovator, and I immediately thought to myself how quickly time passed.

Don't get me wrong, I had tons of fun, but being on the jetovator knocked me down a peg or two on my bike-riding pride. Any sense of balance is lost with the jetovator at first, but once you find it, it goes smooth sailing—or so my friends say. They were able to control the jetovator after a few attempts.

I may not have mastered the jetovator now, but that is part of the charm to those who love a challenge. Unlike a bike, one is unable to skillfully maneuver the jetovator after a few attempts. While the thought of crashing a bike is less scary than falling into the water, one thing is for sure: I am definitely getting back on the jetovator the first chance I get. TS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

but not really

ERWIN ENCINARES
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

ROSELYNMONROYO

WEIGHTLIFTING 101

ROSELYNMONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

While doing this piece, video footage of "weightlifting gone wrong" in the Olympics keep playing on my mind—Hungarian Janos Baranyai grimacing in pain as his right elbow popped out of the socket comes to mind—and other unfortunate incidents that would make you cringe.

Even the best and well-prepared athletes in the world experience these misfortunes, so it is very important to know what should or shouldn't be done when lifting weights, especially for beginners, to avoid getting into those infamous YouTube videos.

Micronesian Games gold medalist and Pacific Mini Games veteran Angel San Nicolas spared TAGA *Sports* some time from his busy training schedule to provide us some safety tips in weightlifting.

1 Stretching and warming-up

Like any other physical activities, stretching is a must to loosen up your muscles.

"Before I lift, I stretch for a few minutes. I use a foam roll on my back and legs to relieve tightness and sore muscles. I try to get my muscles as loose as possible. If I don't do that before lifting, I may experience muscle cramps or a muscle tear."

2 Stay hydrated and make sure to have rest/recover time

Though you're just lifting and not moving around the gym to use multiple equipment/exercise machines, proper hydration and rest are crucial to last through your program that day.

"I stay hydrated with water. I always consider rest in between sets, especially on days I plan to go heavy. For cooling off, I sit for a few minutes then do some minor stretches and use the foam roller again on muscles that are really sore. Always make time for recovery (massage, acupuncture, and ice bath, among others)."

3 Never start your exercise with maximum effort

You're strong and can lift all six grip plates on each side (over 100 lbs, depending on the type of grip plates) even on your first try. However, chances of injuring yourself are high if you do that.

"When you start to lift, increase your weights by small increments or depending on how you feel that day."

4 Never EGO lift

You notice the stares at the gym as you raise the bar or another weightlifter is doing a heavier load, so you decide to show off and outmatch him. You stroke your ego, but you may break your arms and feet in return, as you are not ready for the heavy lift or lose your focus and drop the plates.

"Focus on yourself when lifting and stay with your program. Be consistent."

5 Never lift in tight spaces and clean up

When lifting weights, you do not think of your safety alone, but also the people around you. Weightlifting area and equipment are strategically designated in spots that would minimize, if not totally prevent, accidents. When San Nicolas is doing his rounds at Latte Built Fitness, he always waits for the other guy to finish his routine before starting on his own. San Nicolas also instructed me to go to a spot where it is safe to take pictures of him and the sharp clatter of the heavy plates as they drop was enough to convince me to keep my distance.

"Also, as a part of gym etiquette, always wipe your bar with sanitizing spray and clean around the area where you did your lift."

Lifting weights require mental and physical preparations and one must not do it only for a show.

"You should always have a goal or have a competition to look forward to and, of course, have fun," said San Nicolas, who is training for the Pacific Games that will be held in Apia, Samoa next year.

GEAR UP

The following are the tools of the trade. Some are a must and others are optional and depend on the person's preference and condition when lifting.

Belts, straps, and wraps/sleeves: For spine, hips, back, arms/wrists and knee protection. Lifting belts increase intra-abdominal pressure, which is good for spine and core stability. Knee wraps and sleeves are needed for squats and heavy lifting as they stabilize joints. Straps help increase grip strength, allow you to pull more weight and protect your hands from ripping. Weightlifting chalk/power is also used for grip purposes.

Weightlifting shoes: Starters use regular gym shoes. But if you are dead serious about your program, you must get an appropriate pair. Weightlifting shoes have a raised heel to allow you to squat into a deeper position due to increased ankle range of motion. They help you create a more upright torso that will help you keep your hold on the barbell/bars on the way up. Weightlifting shoes are more stable than regular ones, giving you strong and consistent base to land on when you lift the weights up and bring them down.

Kinesiology tape: For added protection on joints and muscles and minimizes the impact of injuries.

Jump rope: You read it right. This helps you loosen up and work wonders on the calves.

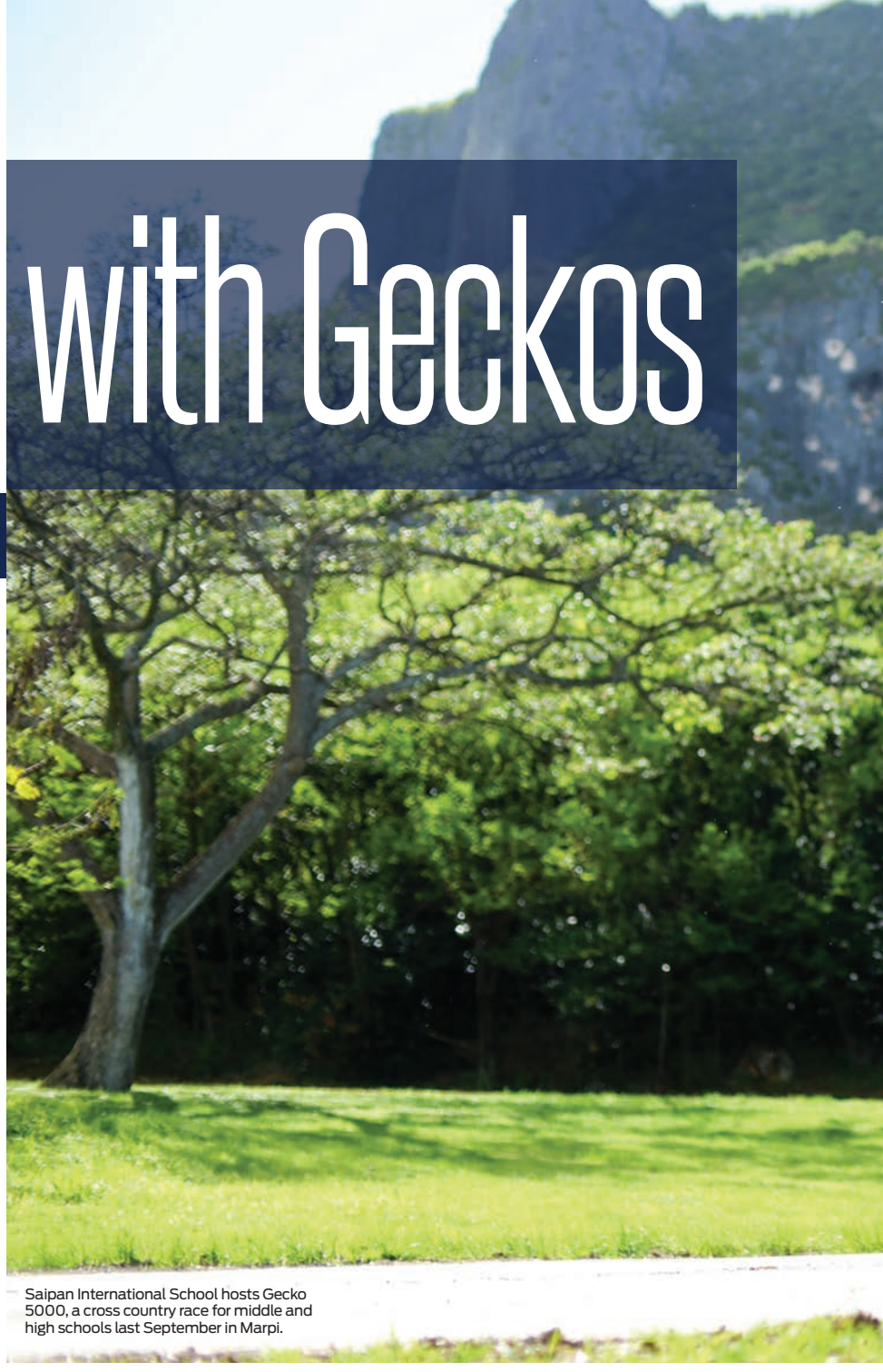
Apparel: A singlet is required in competition to provide support and comfort, but if you're just training at the gym, any top and bottom you're comfortable with will do.

Supporter/undergarment: It's not necessary, but if you are lifting heavy weights, it will help. A person with a weak abdominal muscle is still prone to hernia whether he wears a supporter or not when lifting heavy weights. For women, sports bras are recommended to support breasts and minimize movement, back pain, and discomfort. TG

ROSELYNMONROYO

Running with Geckos

JONPEREZ
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer



LINDSAY NASH

Saipan International School hosts Gecko 5000, a cross country race for middle and high schools last September in Marpi.

Cross-country running is a popular racing event in the U.S. mainland, with the National Collegiate Athletic Association and USA Track & Field hosting their respective competitions, the latter holding what could be the longest—the USA Cross Country Championships that started in 1883 but was not held from 1893 to 1896.

Here in the CNMI, they have the All-Schools Cross Country Championships organized by the Northern Marianas Athletics for more than 10 years now; competitions are held in elementary, and middle and high school divisions, both for boys and girls.

Over the years, NMA's Cross Country series has attracted over 100 students from various public and private schools, with Agape Christian School having the largest number of participants in the past few races.

The high school winners also earn a trip to the Asia Pacific Invitation Cross Country Championship that is hosted by Guam every year.

And cross country running is where Saipan International School headmaster Ron Snyder is hoping to make the most impact in promoting the event. SIS hosted the first school-organized cross country race for middle and high schools last September in Marpi, called Gecko 5000.

Snyder said U.S. schools often host invitational races for other schools, as a sort of warm up for bigger competitions. "That gives schools extra competitions before the sectionals, regionals, and state-wide competitions."

"We had been doing a two-school meet at the elementary and middle school levels—Run for the Coconut—and I thought it would be great if we could extend an additional event to the high schools."

SIS recently revived the Run for the Coconut with Saipan Community School, which previously organized the two-school event against Tanapag Elementary School, now Tanapag Middle School.

Snyder said they plan to turn Gecko 5000 into an annual race sanctioned by the Commonwealth Coalition of Private Schools Association. "To be fair though, I approached NMA and [PSS Athletic Program director] Nick Gross about this last year so that they could sanction it. CCOPSA sanctioned the event."

"SIS will hold the Gecko 5000 again next year and I hope that we can combine it with a community fun run. This year, I invited all public and private schools but only ACS and Marianas High School came. Saipan Southern High School initially planned on joining but something must have happened at the last minute."

He hopes to have a bigger invitational race in the future with the Gecko 5000, which uses international cross country rules, where each school must have four runners to make a team. "I put in a provision for a 'ghost' runner as well, so a school could still have a team with only three runners."

"I would love to see the sport develop both for SIS and the island. I hope we can get more schools next year and can even find a way to bring over Tinian and Rota too. I also hope that other schools can start offering invitationals of their own on 'home courses.'"

Snyder said that cross country running is beneficial to athletes and non-athletes. "I am passionate about cross country running and love working with NMA to help develop the sport.

"[Cross country running] would benefit all student runners on the island. It is a great crossover sport with the ability to increase the stamina and general athleticism of students in a wide range of sports like soccer, swimming, and basketball by building a foundation of cardiovascular health and speed endurance."

He juggles his time as SIS headmaster and a volunteer at NMA. "I also like track and field, and was lucky enough to become an assistant lecturer during the [International Association of Athletics Federations] training last summer. My job as headmaster and volunteer work with NMA keeps me very busy but SIS faculty and students are heavily invested in other sports as well."

SIS students have been active in various sports with the help of their teachers and school staff. Mili Saiki handles SIS' volleyball teams, Rick Linkenhelt is the basketball coach where he also works with his CCOPSA counterparts, Kathy Ruszala manages the cross country and track squads but also gives pointers for the swim team.

"We also have SIS students active beyond this as well. We have many students playing club soccer and there are several on the national teams. One of our teachers and two of our boys are on the national outrigger canoe team. Many of our students play tennis and one is leading the Pacific rankings right now," said Snyder.

He stressed that students should not only focus on academics. "We have a very strong academic program but also realize that the social and emotional development that takes place in competitive athletics and activities is also crucial to educating the whole child, giving them the chance to explore their passions."

BROTHERS

Teammates in the basketball court and brothers in arms in the U.S. armed forces. Meet the Tumaquip brothers—Jose, Joshua, and Jomar. They honed their basketball skills and dreamed of hoops in their homemade basketball court in San Vicente, then went on to serve their country by enlisting in the military—Jose and Joshua in the U.S. Army and Jomar in the U.S. Marine Corps.

ARMY SGT. JOSE TUMAQUIP

- **Age:** 35
- **School:** Northern Marianas College
- **Most memorable game:** 2002 Far East Tournament in Guam (finished 5th place)
- **What he misses most of Saipan:** The beach, family, coaching basketball.
- **Future plans:** Finish my 20-year service in the U.S. Army

The eldest of the brothers is Jose at 35 years of age. He got his start in basketball at the age of 11, playing for William S. Reyes Elementary School and his father, Nestor, was his first coach.

"He basically taught me how to play basketball and enjoy playing the game," he said in an email interview with TAGA *Sports*.

Growing up in a basketball-playing family made him and his siblings very close. "Basketball to my family is very competitive. No one wants to lose, including my dad. He calls a foul every time you touch him," he said. "We don't actually fight, but it's a very physical game when we play. No one wants to lose the game so we play hard every time."

Among the three, Jose admits that youngest brother, Jomar, is probably the most well-rounded player. "He is stronger and faster than me. Jomar and I are very similar when it comes to basketball skills. We both play point guard, we are very good passers, and we have a feel for the game. The difference in our skills is Jomar plays a more inside game, Joshua drives to the basket more and plays tough defense, and I am more of the mid-range game and outside game," explained Jose.

When asked if there are similarities between basketball and serving in the military, Jose said that basketball is a team sport and everyone plays a specific role. In the military, everyone also has a specific job to do. "The military is the ultimate team sports because it doesn't matter where you came from, your race, or your color," he said.

U.S. MARINES CAPT. JOSHUA TUMAQUIP

- **Age:** 32
- **School:** Marianas High School
- **What he misses most of Saipan:** My family (Mom Leonita, dad Nestor, sister Maria, Niece Ella, Gramps Abdon, dad Ignacio, Gramps Camacho), my friends (finalxtreme crew), and the island itself.
- **Future plans:** Long term is complete 20 years of service. Short-term is to get promoted to the next rank and complete his master's degree.

Unlike older brother Jose, it wasn't love at first dribble for Joshua when it came to basketball.

"I started playing ball when I was young with my dad and brothers. I was more on track and field, but toward my last year in elementary school I decided to play it as a competitive sport," he told TAGA *Sports*.

Aside from the usual suspects—his father Nestor and brothers Jose and Jomar—his influences in basketball were Allen Iverson, because "he's the best point guard ever; and the Chicago Bulls, "because they're the best team ever."

The game he couldn't forget was when he scrimmaged against his brothers and the Garapan Rollers coached by Joe Diaz while suiting up for the CNMI National Team under coach Rufino Aguon.

"Majority of the time I only remembered getting into heated arguments with the opposing players," he reminisced.

Joshua said he and his brothers were so obsessed with the sport that basketball was literally what they lived and breathe for.

"Basketball was everything to us back then. We would spend hours in the basketball court just to play for fun. Days before our actual game I would practice alone on my dribbling, driving, footwork, and shooting until I was comfortable with my individual skills," he said.

Joshua said that among the three, Jose is the best shooter, while younger brother, Jomar, is probably the best all-around player. He fancies himself as a defense-first guard.

He also sees a lot of parallels between playing basketball and serving in the U.S. Marines.

"It's all about team effort. You'll never win a game/battle on your own. Working and knowing each other's capabilities is an important aspect to complete any mission. Shoot, move, and communicate is the key to be successful in both categories," he said.

His advice to up-and-coming basketball

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Left to right: CNMI National Team. Jose Tumaquip as a Marianas High School Dolphin guard. MHS Champion Dolphins. Joshua Tumaquip after earning a medal in track, at his right are Josh Kiyoshu and Marc Aldan.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The CNMI's Jomary Tumaquip, right, dribbles in front of Australia's Jan Warbout during their game in the men's division of the 2009 FIBA Oceania Basketball Tournament held at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

IN ARMS

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

U.S. ARMY SGT JOMAR TUMAQUIP

- **Age:** 29
- **School:** Marianas High School
- **What he misses most of Saipan:** Saipan will always be home. I miss everything about it.
- **Future plans:** Plan to stay in the Marine Corps until wife and child go to California. Purchase a house in California and live there until he graduates from college.

players is for them to play to their heart's content, but always have a plan.

"Like my old man used to say, 'Have a plan A to D' because you won't be playing ball forever. Ensure to have a path of income to provide for yourself and your future family," said Joshua.

Jomar, the Benjamin of the Tumaquip hoops-playing brothers, said the game he couldn't forget the most was the 2007 islandwide high school championship game between the Marianas High School Dolphins and the »

Saipan Southern High School Manta Rays.

Starting at point guard in his senior year, Jomar recalled that it was a very memorable finals, considering that the Dolphins entered the game as underdogs, having lost to the Manta Rays already twice in the season.

"Our first loss was in the season opener where our team got dominated by 20-plus points. Our second loss was in the playoffs where we lost by 20 again. Our chances of winning the championship was very slim," he said.

Jomar remembered vividly that Saipan Southern always brought their whole school with them during the games, so naturally the Marianas High School Gymnasium was packed during the championship.

"They had everything. They even brought their school band to distract us from playing our game," he said.

Luckily, Jomar and the Dolphins had a secret weapon—his hair—or a promise to cut his tresses if they manage to win the coveted championship against Saipan Southern.

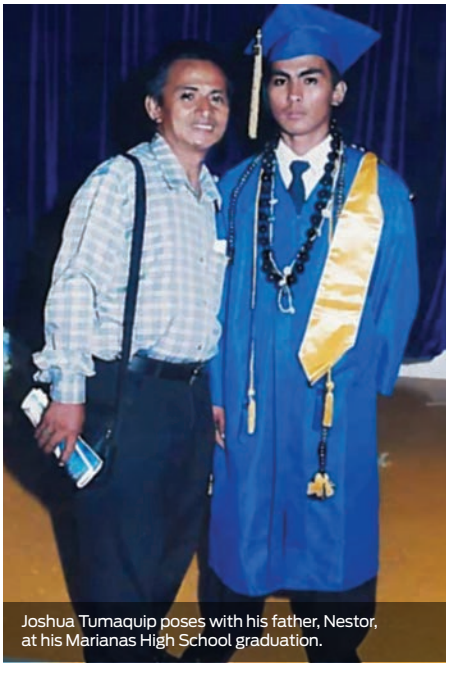
"My teammates always had a problem with my long hair the whole season, Aside from wanting to finally beat Saipan Southern, they also wanted me to shave my head. So, I made a deal with my teammates, I told them if we beat Saipan Southern I'll gladly shave my head."

His pact with his teammates worked, as Marianas High beat Saipan Southern that day by a whopping 20 points and, as previously agreed upon, Jomar had his head shaved by Dolphins coach Nick Gross in front of his teammates at the MHS Gymnasium.

Jomar got his start in hoops a few years back. Like his brother Jose, his formative years in the sport also began at WSR under the tutelage of coach Jude Loste and the team won the championship against Koblerville Elementary School.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jomar Tumaquip with his wife.



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Joshua Tumaquip poses with his father, Nestor, at his Marianas High School graduation.

"We had to play them twice. I remember it being a battle as nobody wanted to lose that game. After that championship, I knew I wanted to play basketball," he said.

He credits his and his brothers' sharp-shooting ways to their father, Nestor. Jomar recalls that when they were just starting in the sport, their dad made their basketball rim in their San Vicente home small to teach them to shoot better.

"[In our] family, basketball was something else. It was a way of life as your day wasn't complete if you didn't play/talk/watch basketball," he said.

Aside from his father, Jomar also acknowledged the "tricks of the trade" he learned from grizzled veterans like Jun Estolas, Elmer Esdrellon, Freddie Peliseman, Edsel Mendoza, and the recently departed Rowell Aranda, with whom he played with in local leagues.

He also thanked coaches Joe Diaz, Rufino Aguon, Elias Rangamar, Ed Manalili, Mark McDonald, and Nick Gross who inspired him everyday to be better, not only in basketball but also in life.

Of his two brothers, Jomar said Jose is definitely the best shooter of the three, while Joshua is the fastest and the toughest defender.

"Our similarities include wanting to win. We simply hated losing to another team. Our differences, I think is our way of moving on from a loss. My brother, Joshua, he will be just fine after losing a game, while I, on the other hand, replays every play in my head on what we could've done better," he said.

As for his advice to younger players, Jomar simply points to former teammate and very good friend Jericho Cruz, who now plays professionally in the Philippines.

"Just keep striving to perfect your game. We've got one of our very own from Saipan who's playing professional basketball. If Jericho Cruz could do it, so can you. Stay focused. There will be trials and road bumps ahead but keep striving for you goal," he said.

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